



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

**999 18TH STREET- SUITE 300
DENVER, CO 80202-2466
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>**

April 20, 2005

Dr. Chip Groat
Dr. Patrick Leahy
U.S. Geological Survey
National Center MS 100
12201 Sunrise Valley Dr.
Reston, VA 20192-0002

Dear Drs. Groat and Leahy,

Over the past five years, the Region 8 Superfund Program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has worked collaboratively with the USGS Minerals Division on technical issues related to the Libby Asbestos Site. I am writing to express our deep appreciation for the exemplary and indispensable support that we have obtained from the USGS Minerals Division.

The Libby Asbestos Site, situated in the northwest corner of Montana, is the location of a former vermiculite mine. Vermiculite was mined in Libby for commercial products; however, the vermiculite was contaminated with asbestos. This asbestos (which is now termed "Libby Amphibole") caused severe health effects (e.g., asbestosis, mesothelioma) and in some cases, death, in both occupational and non-occupational exposure scenarios. The nature of the asbestos contamination in Libby presents a significant technical challenge, and the support provided by USGS Minerals Division has been and continues to be instrumental to our work in Libby.

The USGS Minerals Division has provided distinctive support for Libby in a wide range of areas, including:

- Libby Amphibole & Vermiculite Mineral Identification
- Preparation of Unique Reference Materials (Performance Evaluation Samples)
- Libby Amphibole Characterization
- Electron Microscopy Analyses of Libby Amphibole Materials
- Electron Microscopy Analytical Methods Development
- Reference Material Certification – Scanning Electron Microscopy
- Technical Expert Advice and Reporting

The USGS Minerals Division has not only been an invaluable source of expert technical support, but has in many cases been the only source for their specific types of expertise. Their value to EPA goes beyond their expertise, however; it is especially enhanced given that USGS maintains an agency goal to remain independent of policy decisions. This allows EPA to tap into nationally and internationally recognized experts that do not hold any agenda beyond that of excellence in science. EPA has found this source of expertise to be extremely rare, not available through any other resource including universities and/or many contractors. Thus, if the USGS Minerals Division were to be eliminated, EPA would be left with few options (and in some cases, no options) to replace their support.

It is my hope that EPA may continue its invaluable and indispensable relationship with the USGS Minerals Department in matters at the Libby Asbestos Site and in future projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max H. Dodson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Max H. Dodson
Assistant Regional Administrator
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation

cc: Ms. Sharon Swanson (USGS)
Jim Christiansen (EPA)
Mary Goldade (EPA)